DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 419 344 EC 306 432

AUTHOR Jensen, Rita A.; Kiley, Therese J.
TITLE Teams or Torture?: Creating a Climate for Collaboration.
PUB DATE 1998-04-00
NOTE 44p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Cooperative Planning; *Disabilities; Early Childhood Education; Early Intervention; *Inclusive Schools; *Integrated Services; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Leadership Training; Parent School Relationship; Professional Development; Program Effectiveness; *Teacher Collaboration; *Teamwork; Therapists

ABSTRACT

This paper profiles a school-based attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to early childhood students with special needs via a collaborative, team approach. In addition to describing an integrated therapy team (ITT) application of the comprehensive, integrated services approach, the report: (1) describes how this ITT attempt affected the students' learning environment and the delivery of services to students with special needs; (2) describes and analyzes the roles that team members, collaborative planning, and leadership skills played in this ITT initiative; (3) identifies variables within the school environment and culture which impeded or facilitated this attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to learners with special needs; (4) describes and analyzes the role that professional development played in this ITT initiative; and (5) offers recommendations regarding the collaborative skills and environmental variables essential for successful attempts to provide comprehensive, integrated services to learners with special needs. The seven characteristics of schools which support and facilitate the inclusion of special needs students are discussed, including: a sense of community; leadership, high standards; collaboration and cooperation; changing roles and responsibilities; an array of services; and partnerships with parents. (Contains 39 references.) (Author/CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 419 344

Running head: TEAMS OR TORTURE?

Teams or Torture?: Creating a Climate for Collaboration

Rita A. Jensen and Therese J. Kiley

Bradley University

R. Jensen
T. Kiley

2A

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EC 306732

Abstract

This paper profiles a school-based attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to early childhood special needs students via a collaborative, team approach. In addition to describing an integrated therapy team (ITT) application of the comprehensive, integrated services approach, the authors:

1. Describe how this ITT attempt impacted the students' learning environment and the delivery of services to special needs students.
2. Describe and analyze the roles which team members, collaborative planning, and leadership skills played in this ITT initiative.
3. Identify variables within the school environment and culture which impeded and facilitated this attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to special needs learners.
4. Describe and analyze the role which professional development played in this ITT initiative.
5. Offer recommendations regarding the collaborative skills and environmental variables essential for successful attempts to provide comprehensive, integrated services to special needs learners.

Purpose of Study

This paper profiles a school-based attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to early childhood special needs students via a collaborative, team approach. In addition to describing an integrated therapy team (ITT) application of the comprehensive, integrated services approach, the authors:

1. Describe how this ITT attempt impacted the students' learning environment and the delivery of services to special needs students.
2. Describe and analyze the roles which team members, collaborative planning, and leadership skills played in this ITT initiative.
3. Identify variables within the school environment and culture which impeded and facilitated this attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to special needs learners.
4. Describe and analyze the role which professional development played in this ITT initiative.
5. Offer recommendations regarding the collaborative skills and environmental variables essential for successful attempts to provide comprehensive, integrated services to special needs learners.

Review of Literature

The Comprehensive, Integrated Services Approach

While various models provide school- and community-linked integrated services, most focus on families and local needs with a prevention orientation (Dryfoos, 1994; 1996). Professionals who subscribe to a comprehensive integrated services approach to education and health care acknowledge that all aspects of individuals' lives impact their success as students, patients, family members, and community residents. For example, untreated ear infections may delay language skills, and poor nutrition often results in poor performance or learning (Sattler & Jensen, in press). At-risk students are of particular concern for schools, health agencies, and social service agencies. However, all students can benefit when human service professionals implement a team approach to providing comprehensive, integrated services. Working

collaboratively, these practitioners can address the social, physical, and psychological issues that impact children, families, and communities without duplicating services and getting in each others' way. Because schools serve as the primary delivery points for many of these services, colleges that prepare education and health professionals can operate as catalysts in the collaborative process and in the implementation of services (Sattler & Jensen, in press).

School-Based Application of the Comprehensive, Integrated Services Approach

Inclusionary practices in schools sometimes are predicated on the expectation that students' special needs are best met in the context of an integrated services model. Many factors impact the effectiveness of comprehensive, integrated service delivery systems, and the team which delivers the myriad of services is the most crucial component. However, many other dimensions woven throughout the tapestry of effective teaming often are overlooked. Critical dimensions that provide the framework and context for team approaches to meeting learners' special needs include: collaboration, schools as organizational cultures, teachers as leaders, and establishing cultures of leadership.

Collaboration

Collaboration features prominently in efforts to provide integrated education and health care services to students and their families, as well as efforts to design interdisciplinary learning environments (e.g., Hanson & Lynch, 1995; Jensen & Kiley, 1997; Kaufman & Brooks, 1996; Northfield & Mitchell, 1995). Key variables of the collaborative process that must be present from the beginning include time for the collaborators to meet and plan and the collaborators' abilities to accept and value the tensions involved in collaboration (Johnston & Thomas, 1997).

Dealing with medically fragile, as well as at-risk, students brings additional challenges and tensions to the collaboration paradigm. It is imperative that medical and educational partnerships exist within and among school communities and community agencies. These partnership teams must collaboratively plan, develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs which support the on-going inclusion of each child (Bartlett, 1994). However, because they inhabit different worlds, there are often culture clashes between agencies and schools. The integration of

school and agency personnel can result in the creation of obstacles which further challenge the integrated services team (Batenburg, 1995).

Although many conflicts exist in collaboration, recommendations for developing effective teams have been suggested by a number of researchers. The creation of successful collaborative teams is a process that involves establishing trust, developing common beliefs and attitudes, empowering team members, effectively managing meetings, and providing feedback about teaming (Dukewits & Gowin, 1996). School leadership is also a key variable. Principals must create conditions which ensure that professional development is a part of the school culture, remembering to create consensus, promote shared values, and ensure systematic collaboration (DuFour & Berkey, 1995).

Schools as Organizational Cultures

Even a cursory look at the literature relating to organizational culture reveals a number of definitions. One of the first definitions to hit the popular book market was Deal and Kennedy's (1982) "the way we do things around here." Both before and since then, a variety of other definitions has been offered. However, most of those definitions share a common core which includes the transmission of shared values, beliefs, expectations, common understandings, and other symbolic systems. We view organizational culture as the basic assumptions which operate within an organization, as reflected by the behavior and the value-led outward manifestations (e.g., structure, management style, physical setting) of those unstated assumptions (Jensen, 1988).

Organizations as cultures feature affective components, such as the sense of identification and meaning which often is derived from social groups. An organization's culture acts as a kind of social glue that connects and holds together the organization's different parts. All members of an organization in one way or another influence its culture and subcultures (Carlson, 1996).

Every school possesses historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, beliefs, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community. The cultures of schools encompass daily rituals, important ceremonies, subcultures, cultural networks, underlying values, beliefs about the nature of learners and learning,

assumptions about the purposes of schooling, and the schools' basic organizational designs (Stolp & Smith, 1995). Individual teachers' classrooms operate with their own organizational cultures and cultural networks--cultures and networks created by those teachers and which are the products of the decisions and non-decisions made by them. As such, every class and classroom has its own culture--its own version of "how we do things here;" classroom level learning environments operate as microcosms that exist within the larger context of the schools which house them (Jensen & Kiley, in preparation).

Features of Organizational Culture

Prerequisite to understanding and managing school culture is the task of recognizing it and its outward manifestations. Consequently, in this section we identify key features of organizational culture and some of the observable behaviors that reflect cultural components. In doing so, we draw on the work of Deal and Kennedy (1982), who were predominant among those first to introduce the notion of corporate or organizational culture to the popular press.

Shared Values. Values serve as the bedrock upon which organizational cultures are built. They are the basic concepts and beliefs of an organization which provide a sense of common direction for members of the organization and guidelines for their day-to-day behavior. Values function as the heart of an organizational culture by establishing standards of achievement within the organization. The degree to which they are shared by all members of the organization determines the strength of the organization's culture. In organizations that succeed, members identify, embrace, and act on their shared values.

Leaders of organizations with strong cultures talk frequently and openly about their shared values and beliefs and don't tolerate deviation from the organization's standards. For example, viewing schools as organizations, a shared value that serves as a core component of the school's culture may be the notion that every student can learn or that every student has a contribution to make. Leaders within those schools make it a point to communicate their shared values on a consistent basis and to make them a visible component of the school's culture. Most importantly, they model the enactment of those values--that is, they walk the talk.

Heroes and Heroines. An organization's heroes and heroines personify the culture's values and set standards of performance, thereby providing tangible role models for others to follow. They are the motivators, magicians, the "go-to" people others count on when things get tough--the symbolic figures whose deeds are out of the ordinary but not too far out. An organization's heroes and heroines possess unshakable style and character which they use to demonstrate that the ideal of success lies within human capacity. Managers run organizations, but heroes and heroines create them. In fact, they demonstrate many of the traits of creativity. They're intuitive, visionary, and willing to take calculated risks. Some are born heroes and heroines, as in Bill Gates and Microsoft, Helena Rubenstein and her namesake company, John Dewey and progressive education, Maria Montesorri and Montesorri schools. Others are situational heroes and heroines--people anointed by their colleagues and/or supervisors in recognition of some aspect of their achievement or behavior (e.g., salesperson of the month, teacher of the year) (Jensen & Kiley, in preparation).

Rites And Rituals. Rites and rituals are the systematic and programmed routines of an organization's daily life. In their mundane, day-to-day version (rituals), they show the organization's members what is expected of them. In their extravagant version (ceremonies), they provide powerful, visible examples of what the organization values. Unless organizational leaders tell people what they want them to do and how they want them to do it, they have no right to expect them to do what they want them to do. Rituals and standards define acceptable decorum and call attention to the way procedures are to be carried out. Strong culture organizations create rites and rituals of behavior that exercise the most visible and pervasive influence on "how we do things here."

Standards. Social standards are another facet of an organization's rituals. For example, what is acceptable practice with regard to language? Do people refer to other organization members using a formal title? Are exchanges between administrators and the rank and file encouraged or discouraged? Is it acceptable for members to engage administrators other than their direct supervisors in conversation, or is it appropriate for them to respond but not to initiate? Are side

conversations tolerated at meetings? Is slang or occasional swearing tolerated at meetings? What about in the break room? Much of what goes on in organizations consists simply of people talking with one another. Consequently, setting standards for how they do this has a strong influence on culture. Variables such as public decorum, interpersonal behavior, presentation formats, reports, and procedures all have written or unwritten standards unique to particular organizational cultures (Jensen & Kiley, in preparation).

The Cultural Network. Every school has its own cultural network. It serves as the informal--but primary--means of communication within an organization. As such, the cultural network transmits the shared values and heroic mythology. All members of strong organizational cultures have jobs, but they also have other jobs--jobs that aren't printed on their business cards but that are important nonetheless. Storytellers, spies, priests, whisperers, secretarial sources, gossips, and cabals make up a hidden power hierarchy within the organization, a hierarchy quite different from the published version of the organizational structure. A cultural network connects all parts of the organization without respect for title or positions. It not only transmits information but also interprets the significance of the information for the organization members. Especially in large organizations, effectively working the cultural network is the only way to "get things done" and to understand what's really going on. Consequently, it's important to be familiar enough with the main players of this hidden hierarchy to recognize them and their roles when you see them.

Learning Environments

Numerous studies have examined learning environments and their impact on both cognitive and affective outcomes for students (e.g., Fisher & Fraser, 1982; Goh & Fraser, 1995; Kiley Shepston & Jensen, 1996). A statewide project which focused on improving learning environments in Tennessee transformed instructional values and practices in the elementary system. Results emphasized that some schools are resistant to change while others are more accepting (Butler, 1994). Designing learning environments which encompass the beliefs and values of an integrated services team often creates conflict based on the educational orientation of the teacher or specialist. Also, how the children interact in an inclusive learning environment in

which the child/staff ratio sometimes approaches one to one is a critical variable for special needs populations.

Affective Behavior

A review of the research on the affective domain (Hunt, 1987) concluded that it is clearly evident that affective factors are an important dimension of the teaching/learning process and that the ways in which teachers respond to students and classroom situations relate to cognitive outcomes such as achievement and behavior. The affective factors of motivation, self-esteem, self-perceptions, feelings of confidence, and self-concept of ability also appear to have positive effects on achievement and behavior. Collaboration and cooperation directly influence student affective behavior, as well as set the tone for the classroom dynamics (Crossman & Behrens, 1992).

Teachers as Leaders

Reluctant Leaders?

Teachers often are reluctant to acknowledge themselves as leaders of other teachers. In fact, in one study, less than 10% of teachers identified themselves as teacher leaders (Vance, 1991). "Most teachers do not recognize that a broader role of teacher leadership is open and available to those who wish to assume the responsibilities....Even teachers who already are active teacher leaders do not see themselves that way" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996, p.2). The egalitarian norms of teaching cultures don't encourage teachers to draw attention to themselves. Consequently, teachers may hesitate to be singled out in an environment that historically has valued treating all teachers the same. However, when teachers do see and acknowledge themselves as leaders, they discover the potential to influence their students' learning through their own actions. This belief that they can make a difference is known as teacher efficacy, and it influences student achievement and encourages teachers to place less blame on factors beyond their control (e.g., students' home environment).

Researchers who study recent teacher education graduates' perceptions regarding leadership have found that graduates are sometimes less willing to describe themselves as leaders or change agents than are the principals with whom they work (Kull & Bailey, 1993). Although

those who have been teaching for four or five years perceive themselves to be functioning as leaders more often than their counterparts who have been teaching for one to three years, they still report a low incidence of what they consider leadership behavior. Those studied reported engaging in informal leadership behaviors more often than traditional teacher-leader roles. When graduates described themselves as standing out, they attributed the standing out among their teacher peers to loving, caring about, and relating well to children; trying new ideas and strategies in the classroom; having excellent rapport with colleagues, parents, and administrators; and being enthusiastic about teaching.

Benefits Of Teacher Leadership

When teachers are willing to develop the skills and assume the roles of leadership, potential pay-offs exist for students, schools, and the teachers themselves. Perhaps most significant among those potential benefits is teacher efficacy--the extent to which teachers believe they can affect student learning.

> If teachers feel confident in their abilities to be leaders, they will assume responsibility for the learning of all students. This single outcome from teacher leadership can affect teaching and learning throughout the school. Linking teacher leadership to efficacy in their classrooms can help teachers understand how they can touch the lives of more students. (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996, p. 3)

Retention of excellent teachers is another potential benefit of teacher leadership. If administrators want to keep excellent teachers in education, they need to develop new roles for them that extend beyond the classroom. Fifty percent of new teachers remain in the profession five years or less. Teacher isolation, absence of career ladders, low salaries, and lack of leadership responsibilities contribute to this situation. For high ability teachers, teacher leadership is generally appealing if it influences student learning.

Teachers who view themselves as leaders help overcome resistance to change. When teacher leaders participate in shaping and leading change, there's less resistance. Creating teacher ownership in the change process allows teachers to participate actively in decision making, thereby

decreasing resistance to change. After all, it's more difficult to criticize something when you're a part of it.

Teacher leadership can provide a form of career enhancement by offering opportunities for teachers to expand their areas of influence. The challenge of leadership roles can revitalize teachers and keep them actively involved and experiencing professional growth and development. In leading others, teachers learn about their own practice. Taking on leadership roles can encourage them to engage in reflection, thereby helping them improve their own performance. Influencing other teachers is another potential benefit of teacher leadership. When their colleagues respect teacher leaders, they are influenced by them. They can then help less skilled teachers improve performance.

Finally, engaging in leaderhip roles can increase teachers' feelings of accountability for results. As teachers become involved in decision making and assume authority for making student-related curriculum and instructional decisions, they better understand how they're accountable for student outcomes (Adapted from Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996).

Establishing Cultures of Leadership

Those in formal leadership positions must institutionalize a leadership-centered culture, where people value strong leadership and strive to create it. Administrators who create leadership-centered organizational environments make conscious efforts to identify teachers with great leadership potential early in their careers and to determine what their development needs are. They then plan for that development and also take responsibility for managing the career patterns of young teachers they've identified as having leadership potential (Kotter, 1995).

Teachers who are effective in large leadership roles often share a number of career experiences, such as significant challenge early in their careers. Later in their careers, something equally important happens that has to do with broadening--lateral career moves or unusually broad job assignments. The breadth of knowledge they develop seems to be helpful in all aspects of leadership, as does the network of relationships that they often acquire. Decentralization is the key to creating challenging opportunities for relatively young teachers. It pushes responsibility lower

in an organization and in the process creates more challenge at lower levels (Kotter, 1995). Unless school districts' organizational hierarchies are flattened, the best and the brightest may be discouraged from entering the teaching field (Coyle, 1997).

Planning for Teacher Leadership Development

Teacher leadership is dependent upon a supportive organizational culture, is enhanced by a voice in decision making, and is constrained by lack of time and the egalitarian ethic among teachers. Teacher leaders at the elementary, middle, and high school levels share a number of similarities, in spite of the fact that their perceptions of teacher leadership, its activities, and its responsibilities differ. For example, teacher leaders at all levels have more years of teaching experience than non-leaders. They assume leadership roles for personal and professional reasons, as well as for increased involvement in decision making. Teacher leaders are supported by encouraging individuals, decision making/teaching empowerment, and professional opportunities and are constrained by time, power, and politics. They believe teacher leadership improves their professional practice by encouraging collaboration and decision making and that teacher leadership assists in school improvement efforts by recognizing and utilizing teachers' views and voices (Stone, 1997).

Variables that Support or Hinder Teachers' Leadership Development

Given the many potential benefits of teacher leadership, it makes sense to identify variables that support and hinder its development. Conditions within the educational context, conditions outside the educational context, and conditions within teachers themselves can act as sources of support or barriers to teacher leaders and their development. For example, within the educational context, a strong network of colleague and administrative support can serve to facilitate teacher leaders' development. Principals play a critical role in supporting or hindering teacher leaders. If principals recognize that they can increase their power by sharing it, they help. If they feel threatened and intimidated by teachers who lead, think, and have their own ideas, they hinder. Organizational constraints that can hinder the involvement of teachers in leadership activities include inadequate time for them to meet, ineffective organization of the school day and year, and

insufficient opportunities for teachers to participate in leadership activities without leaving their students. Outside the educational context, family and friends can serve to support individual teachers' leadership activities, but family commitments, along with personal health problems, also can act as barriers that compete with leadership roles (Zinn, 1997).

Teachers themselves often can get in the way of their own leaderhip development. They're concerned about their peers' reactions, afraid of opposition to their ideas, afraid of being criticized, and afraid of standing out--thereby violating teaching's traditional egalitarian ethic. Somewhere along the line, they've also discovered at least a remnant of truth in the advice that if you keep your mouths closed and keep moving, you're less likely to get shot at. After all, silent, moving targets are more difficult to hit (Jensen & Kiley, in preparation).

However, teacher leaders have other concerns about their leadership roles. Many of those concerns relate to the challenge of balancing their leadership roles and responsibilities with their teaching roles and responsibilities. In an effort to make everything fit within the restriction of 24-hour days, they often perform their leadership duties at a variety of times in order to protect their classroom teaching time. Teacher leaders also sacrifice personal time and tend to use time they normally would spend planning and conferencing to attend to their leadership commitments. Consequently, teacher leadership can adversely affect teaching practices, planning, and preparation. Sudden shifts from leading to teaching also may affect teacher leaders' instructional focus (Ovando, 1994).

A Cautionary Word about Teacher Leadership

Although most teacher leaders enjoy the challenge of performing two roles, they sometimes become overwhelmed with the responsibilities of their dual roles. That fact relates to the methods schools use to reward teacher competence. How are teachers rewarded for exemplary performance? Competent teachers are given more responsibility and more work. At some point, the reward becomes a punishment.

When people in formal leadership positions discover individuals who repeatedly and consistently perform high quality work in a timely fashion and with minimal guidance, they wear a

path to their doors, install their e-mail addresses in the "go-to" file, and/or put their phone numbers on speed dial. In short, administrators learn they can rely on those individuals to deliver, and sometimes that reliance becomes over-reliance. In worst case scenarios, the "go-to" people learn that it's best to keep their ideas to themselves for fear of being rewarded with yet another committee assignment or project to implement (Jensen & Kiley, in preparation).

"This "kill the volunteer" phenomenon serves as an example of one of the worst forms of empowerment--when people are expected to implement tomorrow's organizational values without the necessary preparation to be effective in the new environment. Put another way, someone changes the rules of the game after the game has started but neglects to tell the players: (a) that they've changed the rules and (b) what the new rules are" (Jensen & Kiley, in preparation).

Change and Teacher Leadership Development

Studying organizational culture can serve as a means of learning how best to introduce and implement change and can provide clues as to what strategies to employ to help the transition take place. Schools and administrators have an obligation to provide planned, organized, systemic professional development for teachers that enables them to adapt to the changing environment (Patterson, 1993). After all, change cannot be mandated; it's the result of individuals changing. Teachers influence change because they're at the center of the learning process and play a major role in establishing "how we do things here." Consequently, schools only improve when individual teachers change their behaviors, their attitudes, and their beliefs in order to take on leadership roles (Fullan, 1993).

Inclusion creates opportunities for teachers to function as leaders and decision makers, but it requires a different way of thinking about learning--it involves change. Teachers need to be actively involved in the change process if their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs regarding inclusion are expected to change. School cultures which value teacher leadership acknowledge the importance of the change process and share the following features and characteristics.

1. A DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS: Teachers are supported in learning new knowledge and skills. They are encouraged to facilitate the learning of others.

2. RECOGNITION: Teachers are respected and recognized for their professional roles and the contributions they make.
3. AUTONOMY: Teachers are encouraged to take the initiative to make improvements.
4. COLLEGIALITY: Teachers collaborate on instructional and student-related matters.
5. PARTICIPATION: Teachers are actively involved in making decisions and contributing to important matters.
6. OPEN COMMUNICATION: Teachers send and receive communication in open, honest ways at their school.
7. POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT: Teachers experience a positive climate and effective administrative leadership.

(Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996)

Methodology

In this study, the authors used an interpretive research methodology (Erickson, 1986; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) to study Lincoln School's attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to early childhood special needs students via a collaborative approach. The classroom teacher served as the main focus of this study, inasmuch as she was the human service professional charged with the primary responsibility for planning and implementing appropriate education and care for the early childhood special needs students who comprised her morning and afternoon classes. The detailed journal she kept throughout the academic year offered a running record of sorts regarding her part in this collaborative approach to providing comprehensive, integrated services for the students in her classroom. That running record also served as a window into her reflections, observations, and assessments of both the processes and outcomes of this attempt at teaming.

In addition to analyzing the classroom teacher's journal for the purpose of identifying patterns and emerging themes, the authors conducted a series of interviews with her to ascertain the nature and degree of the collaborative planning and teaming which occurred. We also used knowledge gained from the district's ITT program description, a school visit, classroom

observations, and informal interviews with staff members to provide an authentic context for our analyses and to inform our conclusions regarding the manner in which the school culture impacted the integrated therapy team initiative.

Data Sources

The early childhood special education teacher whose students were the recipients of the services provided by the integrated therapy team served as the main focus of this study. As a recent graduate of a teacher preparation program, Emily possessed a current knowledge base relating to early childhood education and providing for special needs learners. That knowledge base, coupled with her willingness to take risks and engage in continuing professional development opportunities, resulted in Emily assuming an informal leadership role for the integrated therapy team, which was composed of experienced education and health care professionals.

In addition to the classroom teacher, those providing direct services included: two program assistants, a school psychologist, a social worker, a speech therapist, a vision itinerant, a hearing itinerant, an occupational therapist, and a physical therapy assistant. However, the integrated therapy team members who met bi-monthly consisted of: the classroom teacher, social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapy assistant, and speech therapist. The district's coordinator of special education services attended one ITT meeting during the academic year, as did the school principal.

As indicated above, the authors used a combination of teacher self-analysis and reflection, journal entries, formal interviews, and informal interviews to collect information regarding this attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to early childhood special needs students via a collaborative approach. We then analyzed those data sources to identify emerging themes and to formulate assertions.

The classroom teacher was the only ITT member whom we interviewed about her participation in the ITT initiative. In response to concerns Emily expressed regarding how other ITT members would react to external study of their involvement in, and reflections regarding, the

ITT initiative, we modified our original plans for data collection to focus solely on her ITT experiences and perceptions. Our reliance on a single perspective of the ITT initiative constitutes a limitation inherent to this study.

Findings

ITT Description

The district's ITT program description was quite thorough in explaining the ITT initiative's purpose, procedures, and participants. However, in comparing the ITT program description with Lincoln School's version of ITT program implementation, we discovered some significant and obvious disparities. In this section, we present the theoretical version of the ITT initiative. Subsequent sections will describe Lincoln School's enacted version of the ITT initiative.

ITT Definition

District special education administrators operationally defined the integrated therapy team as a classroom-based team consisting of a group of specialists who each possess their own areas of expertise. According to the ITT program description, team members use their collective expertise to work together for the purpose of reaching a shared goal of providing maximum educational benefits to the students they serve. Team members "...meet on a regular basis to develop and prioritize objectives for students, share information, problem solve, develop behavioral/discipline plans for classroom management, plan integrated classroom activities, and evaluate student progress. Open communication and sharing of knowledge are vital to the success of these teams" (District's ITT program description, p. 3).

ITT Program Goals

The district's ITT program description identified the following seven goals for its integrated therapy team initiative.

GOAL 1: Improve the coordination and delivery of services to students in their natural environment.

GOAL 2: Improve the development and implementation of functional objectives.

GOAL 3: Improve the continuity and consistency of educational programs.

GOAL 4: Improve student evaluations in preparation for IEPs and MDCs.

GOAL 5: Improve communication and problem solving among team members.

GOAL 6: Increase success of role release by all team members by sharing expertise and training others in necessary skills and techniques.

GOAL 7: Improve the quality of educational programming by providing a system for on-going team evaluation and change. (p. 3)

ITT Philosophical Premise

The district intended the ITT approach to replace the traditional "pull-out" method of providing for learners' special needs. Lincoln School's implementation of this service delivery model was "...an attempt to provide state-of-the-art, best practices to all of its students" (District's ITT program description, p. 1). The ITT's collaborative approach was based on the premise that team members working together can accomplish more than individual human service professionals working in isolation. It rested on the following philosophical base.

1. Students best learn new skills and abilities in the natural environment.
2. Human service professionals introduce skills to learners, based on accepted developmental and age-appropriate standards.
3. Prioritized skills are those that learners will need to function productively and independently.
4. Role release, whereby staff accept and share responsibility for helping learners master new skills in all areas of daily activities, is standard.
5. Staff recognize and respect the expertise, contributions, and professional knowledge of other team members.
6. All students are entitled to learn in integrated environments with their age-appropriate peers.
7. Parents are critical members of the team. (District's ITT program description)

ITT Participants

According to the district's ITT program description, the ITT core members included the: classroom teacher, physical therapist, occupational therapist, and speech-language therapist. These

individuals were expected to attend regularly scheduled, bi-monthly meetings. The program description also identified other ITT members who could not attend all meetings because of their workloads and other responsibilities. These members included the: school nurse, licensed practical nurse, social worker, bilingual teacher, psychologist, hearing-impaired teacher, visually-impaired teacher, and principal. These individuals attended meetings based on agenda topics. In addition, the district's ITT program description stated that parents were integral participants in their children's ITT and that their input was included in problem-solving discussions, assessments, and the development and prioritization of objectives.

ITT Procedures

The district's ITT program description indicated that bi-monthly ITT meetings were scheduled in advance, all team members were provided with meeting schedules, and meeting agendas were posted in ITT classrooms. The program description also stated that team members were responsible for proposing agenda items and reviewing agendas prior to team meetings. Team meetings, which were to be alternately chaired by various ITT members, were to begin with a review of the items from the previous meeting's agenda. New agenda items then were to be discussed, with time allocated at each meeting for planning and discussing classroom-based activities. The program description emphasized that written records should summarize meeting discussions and specify follow-up assignments and due dates and that copies of meeting minutes should be distributed to the core ITT members, the building principal, and other team members when agenda items were pertinent to them or when they attended team meetings.

ITT Members' Responsibilities

In addition to possessing basic competencies relevant to their disciplines, ITT "...members must be willing to work with others, be capable of communicating specific information, as well as concerns, in an objective and straightforward manner, and be aware that their area of concern or expertise is not always the student's number one priority..." (District's ITT program description, p. 6). The district's ITT program description delineated numerous responsibilities for ITT members, which included: developing IEPs that were the result of collaboration among all team

members, including students' parents; following established schedules, arriving promptly at specified times, and informing other team members of unavoidable schedule changes or conflicts; engaging in professional development activities relevant to ITT planning and implementation; and providing safe and clean environments for all students.

In addition to fulfilling their individual job descriptions, all ITT members were expected to function in the roles of other team members, as appropriate. For example, the speech therapist might lead circle time, the classroom teacher might do positioning, or the occupational therapist might lead a group fine motor activity. However, the district's ITT program description acknowledged that, in practice, much of the responsibility for the on-going transfer of skills would fall to the classroom teacher, inasmuch as she was the only ITT member who continually and consistently worked with each child.

According to the district's ITT program description, this practice, known as role sharing or role release, had two primary purposes:

1. To ensure transfer of skills for each child, through emphasis of prioritized and important goals by all ITT members; and
2. To ensure that all ITT members, through the observation and guidance of other team members, knew how to work most effectively with each child.

Classroom Protocol

In the interest of creating effective learning environments which allowed both teachers and students to be productive and successful, the district's ITT program description instructed team members to follow certain guidelines. For example, they were to make concerted efforts to be non-intrusive as they entered and left the classroom. When structured classroom activities were in process, therapists were to attempt to blend into the environment without being disruptive. The program description stated that yelling and loud talking were disruptive and inappropriate, as was talking about children and/or their families in the classroom or other public situations, and that staff should not assume that the children wouldn't understand what was being said about them (District's ITT program description).

ITT Self-Assessment

The district's ITT program description directed integrated therapy teams to complete an annual self-assessment process. As part of the self-assessment process, each ITT member was to complete a self-assessment questionnaire and discuss his or her responses with other ITT members. "The purpose of the team self-assessment is to identify areas of poor communication, conflict, and/or confusion, and to reduce those problems in an attempt to improve the over-all quality and efficiency of service delivery to children" (District's ITT program description, p. 12).

Additional ITT Program Description Components

The district's program description also outlined procedures for: resolving conflicts, problem solving, writing goals, planning IEPs, and involving parents.

Emerging Themes

We were particularly interested in analyzing the relationships between and among:

1. The ITT initiative and the learning environment of the students who received the direct services of the ITT members;
2. ITT members; and
3. The ITT initiative and the Lincoln School culture.

Given those foci, the patterns and themes which emerged from our data analyses were the critical roles which collaboration, schools as organizational cultures, teachers as leaders, and establishing cultures of leadership play in ITT planning and implementation.

Assertion 1:

Children and families that participate in a successful integrated therapy team program benefit from the collaboration and shared expertise of the human service professionals involved.

ITT Benefits

The children and families who participated in Lincoln School's ITT program, on the whole, were positively impacted by the attempt to deliver educational, health, and social services via a comprehensive, integrated services approach. For example, because the ITT members were in the classroom on a regular basis and observed the children's behaviors and interactions in the natural

environment, referrals were more easily made. The ITT members' working relationship also facilitated the referral process.

Another benefit of ITT collaboration was an increase in the team members' awareness and understanding of the goals of other ITT members. This increase resulted in more transfer and carry-over of goal-directed efforts, especially with regard to the collaborative efforts of the social worker, speech therapist, and classroom teacher. They all exchanged ideas and suggestions designed to better meet student needs. The informal Thursday afternoon curriculum team meetings proved particularly beneficial in planning coordinated and well organized instructional activities.

ITT Drawbacks

Sometimes there were so many adults in the classroom at the same time that the student-staff ratio approached one to one. Consequently, students had limited opportunities to interact with each other without adult "interference" or reliance, and continuity of care became an issue. In addition, some of the ITT members were not easily accommodated within the inclusionary setting. Specifically, sometimes attempts to position children or help them complete their exercises proved very distracting to other students, as well as to the teacher.

Role Release

When attempts to role release succeeded, students received direct and immediate benefits. Role release success stories featured the social worker, speech therapist, and classroom teacher.

Social Worker. The ITT social worker conducted half hour in-class group sessions every Monday. Emily, the classroom teacher, noted that she enjoyed these sessions because the social worker accurately judged the students' attention spans and remembered to include motivational components, such as music, movement, appropriate children's literature, and variety in the types of activities. Emily described her attempts to facilitate the role release process with the social worker.

> She has taken the time to observe me as I teach, and she has accepted the classroom rules (for adults and children) and consistently applies them. She doesn't have a problem "getting her hands dirty" and doing what some consider "program assistant work." Quite

> frankly, I do a lot of this myself; we need the help with the influx of children who have multiple physical limitations....
>
> While she teaches and leads the lesson, I assist her and have to remember my own rules about not disrupting the group, but facilitating unobtrusively. I prep materials and activities for her and set up for her as a program assistant would. She makes the effort to find out what the curriculum is and preps accordingly. She was willing from the start to see how behavioral issues were dealt with and to consistently apply these suggestions. (excerpt from Emily's journal)

Speech Therapist. According to Emily, the ITT speech therapist modelled appropriate language for the children without torturing them and everyone else by conducting one on one therapy in a large group setting. The speech therapist also offered praise to both the children and adults involved in the ITT process--praise which served to inspire them to work even harder. In addition to making offers to help prep class materials on her own time, she was supportive of the classroom teacher's attempts to run 45 minute ESL mainstreaming groups. In fact, many times she ran small group lessons with the help of a translator. Emily chronicled some other notable role release activities the speech therapist provided.

> We have two children who needed more oral stimulation in a non-distracting environment, so she takes them out for a half hour two mornings a week with the occupational therapist. Recently, they have been attempting to introduce the children to a device which will give them words and increase their ability to communicate with us. It is a switch that can be programmed with words or phrases that describe the choices the child has. She did the footwork to order the device and taught us how to use it. (excerpt from Emily's journal)

"Unofficial" Inclusion Activities

During the past academic year, Emily began working collaboratively with an ESL teacher to provide her students and the ESL teacher's students with more inclusion opportunities. Although their efforts were not part of the district's "official" ITT initiative, students benefitted nonetheless.

Emily reported that they already have observed some benefits from this mixed ability diverse grouping. Both the kindergarten ESL students and the early childhood special needs students have learned the program routines and have demonstrated that they can work relatively independently in their small group center activities. Emily provided the following description of the inclusion design.

> We have provided a combination of teacher-directed and child-directed activities, utilizing centers such as housekeeping, blocks, science (sand and water), art, easel painting, computer, writing, and table toys. Our early childhood children have benefitted from the modelling provided by their new friends, and they have been able to teach their new friends about computer usage.
>
> The kindergarten children benefit from the computer exposure they otherwise would not have. Also, they have a ratio of about four students to one adult during these learning center experiences. Without this time, the ratio would be 30:1. We have identified children who needed extra help in the regular class, and the social worker, speech teacher, and others have found supports for them as well--giving the ESL teacher ideas for adaptations to help the students remain in the mainstream with the hope of succeeding there.
>
> I benefit from seeing first-hand the processes the kindergarten children go through as they begin to read and write, add and subtract, and form hypotheses about their world--skills that usually have not emerged to this level in my children. (excerpt from Emily's journal)

Assertion 2:

Human service professionals must demonstrate effective interpersonal skills and informed, collaborative decision making to function successfully as members of integrated therapy teams.

What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger?

Results of our analyses indicate that Lincoln School's initial attempt to provide comprehensive, integrated services to early childhood special needs students via a collaborative,

team approach can accurately be characterized as "angst-ridden." For the most part, interactions between and among team members were sporadic and unplanned. In fact, many times team members appeared unannounced in the teacher's classroom to provide services for individual students. In other instances, they scheduled times but did not follow that schedule.

When the team actually did hold planning meetings, the focus was on damage control, the stress among members was apparent, and the affective tone was negative. As one might anticipate, the tensions that existed between and among team members carried over into the learning environment, thereby impacting the students they were attempting to serve more effectively. Although the district's ITT program description specified procedures for conflict resolution and problem solving, to the best of our knowledge, they never were enacted. Here again, failure to authorize someone directly involved in the ITT process to serve as the team leader contributed to the lack of communication and, to some degree, ineffective planning and implementation.

Another example of ITT members' interpersonal effectiveness related to classroom interactions. Because they assumed students could not understand their conversations or interpret their non-verbal communication, some team members often spoke openly about students' limitations, behaviors, and individual cases. Others carried on conversations with the classroom teacher while she was attempting to engage students in meaningful learning activities, or they worked with individual students in ways that distracted other students. These team members routinely exhibited such behaviors, in spite of the fact that the district's ITT program description specifically addressed entering and exiting the classroom in an unobtrusive manner and refraining from discussing students and their families in the classroom.

Collaboration and Credibility

The classroom teacher found the situation untenable but did not know what a socially acceptable role would be for her to play in addressing the situation. Although Emily eventually developed a program handbook of her own which she and some other team members found helpful, it was not granted "official status." All of the other team members were older than she, and one in particular questioned her credibility, suggesting that, due to the fact that Emily had no

children of her own, she was not in a position to know what was in the best educational interests of the students in her classroom. The following excerpts from Emily's journal illustrate some of her frustrations with the collaborative process.

Writing of her two program assistants, Emily reflected:

> I do not envy their position; they are really being pulled from all directions by the ITT--Move this! Watch this! Translate this! Remember this! Where's this? Call her!, etc. Their memories store all of the little and big pieces of information to tell me when I'm with a group or out of the room or at a meeting or working with a child. Two of the ITT members do not appreciate the fact that I ask them to "write it down" for a reason--hence a lot has to be remembered. The biggest challenge comes in remembering who took which child and what adaptive equipment the child forgot today, so that we can write home and once again ask the parent to send the brace, etc. (excerpt from Emily's journal)

Focusing on two sources of particular stress and frustration, Emily revealed that Mondays and Fridays were her favorite days of the week.

> Why, you ask? Well, I think the basic reason is that on Mondays and Fridays we don't have the two people who stress me out the most in the room....We don't have to hear the negative comments, the whispering, and the constant questioning of our actions....The children are disrupted by positioning of other children and exercising that--despite our numerous attempts to reschedule these activities at a different time continue to occur during circle time and group activities. If they didn't, we wouldn't have to hear things such as, "Hey, Maria, tell this guy in Spanish that he has to pinch his butt." If they didn't, we wouldn't have to be distracted by adults who can't be quiet themselves, let alone listen and model how to participate.
>
> We have smooth days where everyone is relaxed, and we <u>laugh</u>! We <u>play</u>! We <u>sing</u>! We feel successful in our teaching and learning. These are the days the judgmental spies are <u>not</u> in the room, and I can usually trust that children won't disappear to a far-off place to exercise and be unaccounted for--it has happened! (excerpt from Emily's journal)

Role Release

However, there were bright spots as well. Emily and her program assistants worked well together, and she developed comfortable and positive working relationships with the ITT social worker and speech therapist. Although Emily continued to experience feelings of frustration with some elements of the ITT approach, she was able to identify collaboration highlights and areas where headway had been made. Consider the following excerpts from Emily's journal and her responses to interview questions.

Social Worker. Emily came to enjoy collaborating and planning with the ITT social worker. She found the social worker to be open to suggestions, conscientious about keeping Emily informed regarding activities and plans, and courteous regarding changes and cancellations. When asked to characterize her interactions with the social worker, Emily offered the following summary.

> She is usually very quiet and does not disrupt the class when she enters the room. She is very considerate of the children and really tries to choose an appropriate time to talk to the adults in the room when needed. She offers suggestions when she has them and remembers how much program assistants and teachers appreciate someone who praises their efforts and attempts to role release, taking on former physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech/language therapy responsibilities.
>
> I put my arm around her last week and thanked her for her support and her great ideas she brings to class. I told her I could teach with her anytime. She is the first teacher in a long time that I feel I can comfortably role release with. I trust her and feel confident that she will uphold the high expectations we have for the class and will respect the structure of the class so that the day runs smoothly, even after she's gone. She understands the individual needs of the children and can adapt her activities accordingly--because she has been a good observer and has not been afraid to admit she has questions, as we all do.... (excerpt from Emily's journal)

Speech Therapist. Collaborating with the speech therapist also was a productive and enjoyable experience for Emily. The speech therapist shared professional resources with Emily which helped

her better understand the specific needs and challenges of various children. In turn, the speech therapist was willing to admit she didn't know everything and would ask Emily for information and help. When asked to reflect on her collaboration with the speech therapist, Emily provided the following summary.

> Working with our speech teacher has been equally enjoyable this year. She is very conscientious about the fact that, even though we are an ITT, I am still responsible for the movement, whereabouts, safety, and educational content of each child's day. She always begins with, "Would it be okay if...?" or "Is this a good time to...?", etc. She doesn't just walk in and disrupt the group; she either joins during a transition or waits for one.
>
> ....I trust her in the class and feel she does a good job with children in small group situations or one on one. However, she seems a bit shy about wanting to lead the group. My guess is this is because last year I stated that the program wasn't long enough to let everyone have a group to run each week. I'd never get to lead one myself. To be honest, because I trust her, I would be willing to let her have a time slot--I trust that all of the observations she has made of the class would help her to plan appropriately for the diverse needs of the children. She would ask if she had a question, and she seems to support the curriculum that I have planned with team input (following initial brainstorming and research).
>
> She too is not afraid to do program assistant work and seems to realize that, if you walk in a room like ours, then you are expected to help if you know what needs to be done. I admire her ability to use humor to calm us in tense meetings and to provide support for my educational issues in team meetings. (excerpt from Emily's journal)

"Unofficial" Inclusion Activities

At noted previously, during the past academic year, Emily began working collaboratively with an ESL teacher to provide her students and the ESL teacher's students with more inclusion opportunities. Their efforts were self-initiated, and they sacrificed planning periods to find the time for program implementation. This "unofficial" but successful collaborative inclusion initiative

illustrates how students can benefit when human service professionals trust and respect one another enough to work together for a common goal. Team members' personalities play key roles in facilitating or impeding collaborative projects of any kind. Emily didn't wait for us to ask her about her collaboration with the ESL teacher. She volunteered the following synopsis.

> I think I have mentioned this before, but I'll say it again. I really enjoy working and planning with the kindergarten bilingual teacher. We began an experimental mainstreaming program in September....She says she has really enjoyed my help.
>
> She is a bilingual teacher. In other words, her major was hotel management, and she has eight years to gain her teaching credential, during which time she is teaching. Luckily for her students, she is bright, very responsible, a good learner, and a great listener. She seeks answers and tries new things. She has been willing to let me show her how I was taught to make plans and balance and integrate curriculum. I can help her get a small idea, and she runs with it, creating a masterpiece.
>
> We recently were accepted to the district's first formal mentoring program, and I will soon begin "training" for that. The focus is on math and science, so we are hoping to learn a lot. (excerpt from Emily's journal)

Assertion 3:

Successful implementation of the integrated therapy team approach requires school environments and cultures which provide systems and support that facilitate the collaborative efforts of integrated therapy team members.

Conspicuous by their absence from the scenario described in this study were several elements critical to the successful implementation of a comprehensive, integrated services approach to providing for the special needs of young children. The school culture only minimally supported and facilitated the team's efforts, partly because the ITT approach departed radically from the commonly acknowledged method of "how we do things here." For example, the individuals who comprised the ITT were not provided adequate time for collaborative planning or adequate

guidance with regard to implementing what for them was a new approach at serving the special needs of early childhood students.

Leadership

In addition, the ITT initiative suffered from a lack of leadership. Consequently, the team's efforts often lacked a clear sense of direction, and a considerable amount of time was lost to ambiguity of purpose. The building principal did not participate in team planning and the district's special education administrator only attended one of the ITT bi-monthly meetings. Although the district's ITT program description stated that team members were to rotate the responsibility for leading team meetings, this strategy didn't seem to serve the team or its purposes well. The resulting lack of ownership contributed to the cancellation of four bi-monthly ITT meetings in one academic year.

When meetings were held as scheduled, they often lacked purpose and substance. For example, much of one meeting was spent deciding who would bring treats to the next meeting. Other times, meetings proved particularly tense and stressful, due to the misunderstandings and second guessing that had accumulated throughout the past month.

Another area where leadership was lacking was in the area of communication. Although the district's ITT program description stated that meetings would be called, agendas would be posted, and team members would be notified, it was curiously silent when it came to identifying who was to be doing the calling, posting, and notifying. Most often, tasks associated with communication fell, by default, to the classroom teacher. As often happens in school environments, she was given no formal authority but had plenty of responsibility.

Key Players

Another factor that made ITT meetings unproductive was the absence of key service providers. For example, the school nurse, educational consultant, psychologist, vision itinerant, and hearing itinerant were not invited to participate in ITT meetings. However, most notable among those who were left out of ITT meetings were the two program assistants who spent their entire day in the classroom providing direct services to the early childhood special needs students.

We find this omission interesting in a disturbing sort of way, especially in light of the fact that a physical therapy assistant--a position we find comparable to the program assistants--routinely attended ITT meetings. Such a situation leads us to speculate that, were someone given the formal authority to lead and coordinate the ITT initiative and meetings, this oversight would have been corrected. As it was, individuals with first-hand information that could have been used to inform the ITT's decision making process were left out of the loop. In addition, the program assistants found themselves in the unenviable position of being told what to do by a variety of people, when they themselves had no voice in the process.

In an effort to compensate for a lack of adequate leadership and collaborative planning time, some of the direct service providers met informally every Thursday afternoon in Emily's classroom to sketch out weekly plans for curriculum and instruction appropriate to the students' learning needs. The classroom teacher, two program assistants, school nurse, social worker, and speech therapist attended these "unofficial" weekly curriculum meetings.

Rewards

We'll describe one final school culture variable that served as an impediment to the successful implementation of the ITT initiative. We call that variable the "kill the volunteer" phenomenom. It relates to how schools as organizations reward competence. Emily was a very competent teacher who set her own professional development goals, engaged in effective and accurate self-assessment and reflection, and successfully planned and implemented developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction. Her reward for exemplary performance was more students in her classroom--many of whom possessed very challenging special needs.

When piloting new programs, generally efforts are made to minimize the effects of trial and error by keeping the numbers of students impacted by the new--and therefore untested--program relatively low. However, at last count, Emily's morning class included 14 students, as did her afternoon class--a significant increase from previous years. Although no one volunteered an explanation for the increase, our speculation is that it resulted from a combination of Emily's competence and her participation in the ITT initiative.

All of Emily's students had speech and language difficulties and cognitive delays. This is fairly typical for an early childhood special education class. However, the students who were placed in Emily's classroom during the last academic year had much more severe disabilities and delays than those of students placed in her classroom during previous years. This year's placements exhibited delays ranging from six months to four years, and their disabilities included spina bifada, cerebral palsy, behavior disorders, emotional disorders, and visual impairments, as well as severe developmental delays. In addition, one student had a tracheotomy tube that required constant vigilance on the part of the classroom teacher and program assistants.

In spite of Emily's competence and the support of other ITT members, the number and combination of students placed in her classroom seems unreasonable, especially in light of the fact that her main college preparation was in early childhood education, with only an endorsement in early childhood special education. Schools must find other--more appropriate--ways of rewarding exemplary performance.

Administrative Support

Building principals can help or hinder change initiatives. The good news was that Emily felt her principal supported and facilitated her efforts--both formal and informal--to provide inclusion opportunities for students. Writing in her journal, Emily reflected that her principal

> ...is much more supportive this year than she seemed to be last year. I feel comfortable going to her in times of need: just to vent, look for a solution to team issues, ask permission to do something, etc. She made it possible for an ESL teacher and me to work on our mainstreaming together by specially scheduling our gym and art classes so we could create the low staff-student ratios for the program. She has offered praise for the things she sees and likes in our program, as well as our other efforts on behalf of Lincoln School children.
>
> She has helped me out in ITT when I felt our so-called leader wasn't providing much help. She offered concrete suggestions for a problem I was having with a person on the team. I really feel like she appreciates the time I put in with the class and feels I do a

> great job. Other staff members have told me that she tells them that I'm an excellent teacher, etc.--all the things I feed off of. I'm a sucker for an appreciative boss. I work ten times harder when I feel appreciated. I think that the school being in its second year of operation now has taken some of the pressure and politics off her, freeing her up to observe the good work of her staff members and show them her appreciation. (excerpt from Emily's journal)

Assertion 4:

Change initiatives, such as the integrated therapy team approach, must include professional development opportunities, expectations, and commitments for all who participate in the initiative.

Professional Development Opportunities

Most of Lincoln School's ITT members did not participate in any form of professional development, although the classroom teacher had the opportunity to visit a school for the purpose of observing their application of the ITT approach and talking with the human service professionals involved in that initiative. Her summary of that visit featured reflections regarding the notion of innovation configuration.

> ...the programs' physical arrangements, schedules, and disabilities were so different that it was difficult to see parallels to our programs with regard to actual questions about "what it looks like." It will look different everywhere you go. There are personality/style differences, population differences, administrative differences, environmental arrangement differences, time schedule differences, etc. (excerpt from Emily's journal)

Professional Development Expectations and Commitments

However, apart from this single school visit and the district's ITT program description, no other formal professional development opportunities were provided for ITT members. Most of the ITT members graduated from college programs that did not emphasize collaborative approaches to the delivery of human services and did not require them to acquire and apply effective interpersonal, decision making, and collaboration skills and strategies. Consequently, the school culture's failure to include professional development opportunities, expectations, and commitments

as integral components of this change initiative allowed ITT members to conduct business as usual --if they so chose. Lack of professional development opportunities, expectations, and commitments also produced considerable and measurable differences between the proposed and enacted versions of the ITT initiative (e.g., meeting cancellations, limited communication, no self-assessment or program evaluation).

As we stated in our review of literature, expecting people to implement tomorrow's organizational values without the preparation necessary to be effective in the new environment constitutes one of the worst forms of empowerment. Lincoln School's attempt to implement an ITT approach to providing for the special education and health needs of early childhood students serves as an example of this form of empowerment. Although they were informed that the rules had changed and, via the district's ITT program description, were told what the new rules were, ITT members were not invited to participate in the process of creating those new rules. Rather than participating actively in the change process, change was something that was done to them.

Conclusion

Characteristics of Inclusive Schools

In conducting our final assessment of Lincoln School's attempt to implement an integrated therapy team approach to providing comprehensive education and health services to early childhood special education students, the characteristics of inclusive schools served as our assessment criteria. Schools which support and facilitate the inclusion of special needs students share seven common characteristics: a sense of community, leadership, high standards, collaboration and cooperation, changing roles and responsibilities, an array of services, and partnerships with parents (Burnette, 1996). After briefly summarizing each characteristic of inclusive schools, we offer our insights regarding the degree to which Lincoln School exhibited that characteristic.

A Sense of Community

Inclusive schools enact the philosophy that all students belong and can learn in the mainstream of school and community life. They value diversity and accept and support all learners

by helping them develop feelings of self-worth, pride in their accomplishments, and mutual respect (Burnette, 1996). Because the majority of Lincoln School's students spoke Spanish as their first language, Lincoln was a designated English as a second language (ESL) school. Given its population base, the Lincoln staff, most of whom spoke fluent Spanish themselves, were well tuned to their students' cultural and language needs. The staff's understanding and appreciation of the need to include all students transferred to the realm of providing for students' special education needs as well.

Leadership

Principals of inclusive schools involve their staffs in strategic planning and implementation of change initiatives (Burnette, 1996). Lincoln School's ITT initiative originated with the district's division of special education. Perhaps for that reason, the building principal's sporadic and tangential participation in the ITT initiative primarily involved extinguishing fires rather than preventing them. Due to a lack of formal ITT leadership--both at the district and the building levels--Lincoln teachers who were not ITT members were not involved in the initiative--directly or indirectly; nor were they informed of the ITT members' activities.

High Standards

Inclusive schools provide students with opportunities to achieve high learning outcomes. Instructional content, levels of achievement, and the way instruction is delivered reflect students' needs (Burnette, 1996). Given Lincoln's Spanish speaking population, its students had some special needs regarding the way in which instruction was delivered. Many teachers at Lincoln delivered instruction primarily in Spanish and did little by way of helping students become proficient English language speakers, listeners, readers, and writers. Attempts to accurately and reliably assess the abilities and needs of special education students were hampered by the routine use of standardized tests which were conducted primarily in English, even when students spoke and understood little English.

Collaboration and Cooperation

Inclusive schools encourage their students and staffs to support one another through collaborative arrangements (e.g., buddy reading, peer tutoring, team teaching, cooperative learning, teacher-student assistance teams) (Burnette, 1996). Our observations and informal discussions with the Lincoln principal and staff led us to conclude that collaborative and cooperative ventures were supported more in word than in deed. At the building level, no one was likely to actively oppose attempts at collaboration, but few people were likely to actively support or assist such attempts. Certainly that was the case with the ITT initiative.

Changing Roles and Responsibilities

Inclusive schools modify staff and teachers' traditional roles. For example, teachers do less direct teaching and assist more, and school psychologists work more closely with teachers in their classrooms (Burnette, 1996). Our knowledge regarding this criterion was limited to the human service professionals who served as ITT members. Although the district's program goals and description advocated role release, as we indicated previously, there was little evidence that ITT members deviated much from their traditional roles.

An Array of Services

Inclusive schools offer their students access to an array of coordinated education, physical health, mental health, and social services (Burnette, 1996). Although Lincoln School probably was ahead of the curve on this criterion, ample room for improvement remained. Certainly those students who were part of the ITT program had access to a variety of education, health, and social services. However, the coordination of those services was uneven at times.

Partnerships with Parents

Inclusive schools welcome parents as equal and essential partners in their children's education (Burnette, 1996). Here again, our knowledge was limited to those students who were part of the ITT program. Emily, the ITT classroom teacher, made a concerted effort to communicate with and involve the parents of her early childhood special needs students. Due to the fact that her Spanish fluency was somewhat limited (but improving), she relied on one of her

program assistants to help her compose parent newsletters and memorandums and to accurately translate parents' questions and concerns.

Recommendations for Successful Implementation of the ITT Approach

Organizational Features that Facilitate ITT Approaches

In a succinct, but interesting, statement, Kohn (1996) suggests that "To meet needs, we need to meet" (p. 87). Meeting the needs of students requires that teachers, support staff, and family members become involved in programs that focus on collaboration; programs that focus on the importance of effective, integrated learning environments; and programs that emphasize the critical nature of affective behaviors. When attempts to provide comprehensive, integrated services via a collaborative, team approach: make no provision for collaborative planning, schedule limited time for team members to meet, and offer no guidance or clear direction, they illustrate the worst form of empowerment. Such attempts expect integrated therapy team members to implement an organizational value (e.g., collaborative provision for special needs) without the preparation necessary to succeed. Ill-conceived attempts to plan and deliver integrated services via a collaborative approach also create tension between and among team members. As one might anticipate, this tension carries over into the learning environment where it impacts students, thereby cancelling out many of the potential benefits a collaborative approach has to offer.

A key contribution this study makes rests with its attestation to the critical need for the creation of school cultures which provide the systems and support that facilitate collaborative efforts. In the absence of the dimensions crucial to successful collaboration (e.g., leadership, staff development, planning time, a shared mission, clear communication, staff empowerment, consistent expectations, collegiality), team members' time, energy, and attention will of necessity be consumed by survival needs. Without such provisions, the team's efforts will lack a clear sense of direction, and the team will lose a considerable amount of time to ambiguity of purpose.

Program Evaluation

Although the district's ITT program description indicated that ITT members should engage, both individually and collectively, in self-assessment, that did not happen formally. In addition, as

too often is the case in education, no formal provisions for program evaluation--internal or external--were planned or enacted. Such steps need to be taken if ITT program strengths are to be acknowledged and program weaknesses are to be addressed.

Collaborative Skills

The long-term success of school improvement depends on the ability of participants to function productively together (Donaldson & Sanderson, 1996). This study clearly indicates that positive interactions and relationships among staff are prerequisites to effecting a paradigm shift on the survive/thrive continuum. It also serves as a reminder that effective interpersonal relations and skills are critical to the creation and maintenance of learning environments and classroom climates which facilitate the cognitive and affective development of early childhood special needs students.

> Whether working as members of integrated therapy teams within school settings or as members of cardiac or orthopaedic rehabilitation teams within hospital or out-patient settings, today's human service professionals must demonstrate effective interpersonal skills and informed, collaborative decision making in order to function successfully as members of these teams. It is no longer enough--and in fact it was never enough--for them to master the knowledge bases appropriate to their disciplines (e.g., physical therapy, learning disabilities, counseling, pediatric nursing). Any health care consumer who has heard the conflicting opinions of different health care providers as they talked about--but not to--the consumer understands and appreciates the need for human service professionals who operate successfully as members of an integrated team. (Sattler & Jensen, in press)

Colleges who prepare human service professionals must provide ample authentic opportunities for preservice practitioners to acquire and apply effective interpersonal, decision making, problem solving, and collaboration skills and strategies. All of those involved in delivering education and health services via a comprehensive, integrated services approach (e.g., teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, counselors, speech pathologists) must be comfortable with the tensions inherent to the collaborative process and must exhibit a collaborative spirit.

Leadership

All of those responsible for creating school environments and cultures conducive to the success and productivity of their organizations' members (e.g, principals, special education administrators, lead teachers) must identify and respond appropriately to organizational variables which facilitate or impede attempts to provide comprehensive, integrated services to special needs learners. They also must enable teachers and other human service professionals to serve in leadership roles.

In Lincoln School's application of the ITT approach, the classroom teacher discovered that, by default, the responsibility for the majority of the team communication, planning, scheduling, and general coordination was left to her. However, she was given no formal authority to serve in a leadership capacity. Particularly in those instances where other ITT members questioned her credibility, her decisions, her actions, and her ideas, she found this situation extremely frustrating. Even when she had suggestions for resolving obvious and on-going problems and conflicts, she often did not offer them, for fear of not being taken seriously.

The majority of the ITT services were delivered in Emily's classroom, Emily was the only ITT member who was with all of the students on a consistent basis, and Emily was responsible for the majority of the instructional planning. Consequently, we believe it makes sense that she have the formal authority for leading the ITT initiative. Formal designation as the ITT leader would enable Emily to: be a more effective team member, improve team communication, enhance coordination of team planning and service delivery, and improve the quality of services students receive. In addition, it would likely ease some of the stress and tension Emily felt and would provide her with some built-in credibility.

Professional Development

School cultures must provide ITT members with appropriate and on-going professional development opportunities. Moreover, there should be the expectation that all team members routinely engage in professional development activities relevant to their ITT roles and responsibilities. Finally, ITT members must demonstrate a commitment to taking reseponsibility

for and planning their own ITT professional development. When change initiatives such as the integrated therapy team approach include professional development opportunities, expectations, and commitments for all initiative participants, students and their families benefit directly. Doing so also constitutes a first step toward transforming one of the worst forms of empowerment into a form of empowerment which human service professionals are much more likely to find desirable.

References

Abdal-Haqq, I. (February 1993). Integrated services: New roles for schools, new challenges for teacher education. Digest, ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.

Bartlett, C. (1994). Developing medical and educational partnerships in school setttings to meet health-related and educational needs of students who are medically fragile: How can rural schools catch that elusive rainbow? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 369 613).

Batenburg, M. (1995). Community agency and school collaboration: Going in with your eyes open. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 383 901).

Burnette, J. (1996). Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms: From policy to practice. ERIC Review, 4(3), 2-11.

Butler, E. D. (1994, April). Improving learning environments through a state-wide collaborative. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Carlson, R. V. (1996.). Reframing & reform. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Coyle, M. (1997). Teacher leadership vs. school management: Flatten the hierarchies. Clearing House, 70(5), 236-239.

Crossman, D., & Behrens, S. (1992). Affective strategies for effective learning. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 344 573).

Deal, T. E., & Kennedy, A. A. (1982). Corporate cultures. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

Donaldson, G., & Sanderson, D. (1996). Working together in schools: A guide for educators. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 399 679).

Dryfoos, J. (1994.). Full-service schools: A revolution in health and social services for children, youth and families. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dryfoos, J. (1996). Full-service schools. Educational Leadership, 53(7), 18-23.

DuFour, R., & Berkey, T. (1995). The principal as staff developer. Journal of Staff Development, 16(4), 2-6.

Dukewits, P., & Gowan, L. (1996). Creating successful collaborative teams. Journal of Staff Development, 17(4), 12-16.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Whittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching. (3rd ed., pp. 119-161). New York: Macmillan.

Fisher, D., & Fraser, B. (1982). Use of Classroom Environment Scale in investigating relationships between achievement and environment. Journal of Science and Mathematics Education in Southeast Asia, 5(2), 5-9.

Fullan, M. G. (1993). Change forces. New York: Falmer.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). Becoming qualitative researchers. White Plains, NY.

Goh, S., & Fraser, B. (1995). Learning environment and student outcomes in primary mathematics classrooms in Singapore. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 389 627).

Hanson, M. J., & Lynch, E. W. (1995). Early intervention: Implementing child and family services for infants and toddlers who are at risk or disabled (2nd ed.). Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Hunt, W. (1987). Teaching and learning in the affective domain: A review of the literature. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 288 871).

Jensen, R. A. (1988). Iowa's young leaders: Characteristics, organizational environment, and career orientations. Ames, IA: Iowa State University.

Jensen, R. A., & Kiley T. J. (1997). Significant connections: Mentoring relationships and processes. Eastern Education Journal, 26(1), 37-44.

Jensen, R. A., & Kiley, T. J. (in preparation). Teaching and learning in the 21st century. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Johnston, M., & Thomas, J. (1997, March). Reframing our differences. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (1996). Awakening the sleeping giant: Leadership development for teachers. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Kaufman, D., & Brooks, J. G. (1996). Interdisciplinary collaboration in teacher education: A constructivist approach. TESOL Quarterly, 30(2), 231-51.

Kiley Shepston, T., & Jensen, R. (1996). Home and school as learning environments that impact the development of primary students' print concepts and reading attitudes. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 397 049).

Kohn, A. (1996). Beyond discipline: From compliance to community. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Kotter, J. P. (1995). What leaders really do. In J. T. Wren (Ed.), Leader's companion: Insights on leadership through the ages. (pp. 114-123). New York: The Free Press.

Kull, J. A., & Bailey, J.D. (1993, April). Perceptions of recent graduates: Leadership and "standing out." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Northfield, J., & Mitchell, I. (1995, April). Bringing a research focus into the teaching role. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Ovando, M. N. (1994, October). Effects of teachers' leadership on their teaching practices. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the University Council of Educational Administration.

Patterson, J. L. (1993). Leadership for tomorrow's schools. Alexandria, VA: Assocation for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Sattler, J. L., & Jensen, R. A. (in press). Innovation in the College of Education and Health Sciences: Connected learning through redefined disciplines. Bradley University Centennial Symposium. Peoria, IL: Bradley University.

Stolp, S., & Smith, S. C. (1995). Transforming school culture: Stories, symbols, values and the leader's role. Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

Stone, M. (1997, March). Commonalities and differences in teacher leadership at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Vance, P. S. (1991). The initiating-extended-role teacher: Exploring facets of teacher leadership. Dissertation Abstracts International, 53, 01A-60.

Zinn, L. F. (1997, March). Supports and barriers to teacher leadership: Reports of teacher leaders. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.